



PO Box 129 ■ HARWOOD, MD 20776 ■ 410-956-9006 ■ FAX 410-867-3623 ■ E-MAIL midar001aol.com ■ www.midarmd.com

March 1, 2003

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 Marlene H. Dortch
 Secretary
 Office of the Secretary
 Federal Communications Commission
 445 12th Street, SW, TW-B204
 Washington, DC 20554

Re: Application by Verizon Maryland, Verizon Washington, DC and Verizon West Virginia for Authorization To Provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in States of Maryland, Washington, DC and West Virginia, WC Docket No. 02-384

Dear Ms. Dortch.

I am writing on behalf of MIDAS, Inc., Maryland's Economic Development Association. MIDAS is a professional association of over 300 members holding key leadership positions in local and regional economic development organizations, as well as cabinet-level positions in State agencies. Our members work for virtually all of the state's 23 counties and the City of Baltimore, dozens of important private companies and a number of non-profit agencies, each of which has a stake in continuing Maryland's strong economic growth.

The mission of MIDAS is to promote the economic well being of the State of Maryland by working to improve the state's business climate and the professionalism of those in the field of economic development. To participate in projects and activities designed to increase job opportunities, to stabilize and to diversify the economy of the State of Maryland.

Consistent with our Mission, I write to support the request by Verizon, Inc. to offer long-distance service to Maryland residential and commercial customers. We are confident that the ability of Verizon to offer long distance service will produce a positive economic benefit to Maryland.

We believe strongly that a market with robust competition invariably leads to lower prices and improved service. The competition between States for new economic activity is well documented. It is essential that Maryland remain in the forefront of states with an attractive business climate. As communication costs and services play an ever-increasing role in the success of Maryland businesses, we urge prompt approval of the Verizon request.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Lofton, CEcD
 Executive Director

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